2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
SH5 Tehuelche SH5

useless. Tankelow, however, found an ostrich and nest, the eggs from which, about thirty in number, he, according to Indian custom, divided among those who came up before they were removed from the nest; among these lucky individuals was myself; for, seeing him make to the spot, and the male bird get up, and being moreover, well mounted and exceedingly hungry, I was among the first arrivals. Far away to the right of our track, extending thirty or forty miles eastward, lies a district called by the Indians 'The Devil's Country,' which, they assured me, is never entered, probably from the barren and impracticable nature of the surface, which seems, from description, to be even worse than the wilderness traversed by us. Beyond this district there is a practicable track, sometimes followed by the Indians, leading northward, probably used as a route to the Chupat; but from that line to the sea the country is so impassable that the Indians say it would require two years to proceed by the sea-coast from Santa Cruz to the Rio Negro. The existence of such tracks as these, and the desolate Travisias encountered near the coast, have probably caused Patagonia to be described as an arid, almost waterless country; but, in reality, after passing the coast barrier most of the interior abounds in lagoons, springs, and frequent streams; and, even in the Travisias, the numerous wild animals met with show that water exists.

Towards evening we left the snow behind us; and descending a lofty hill, which had bounded our view all day, came to a large swelling down, from which the prospect was far more encouraging. Rolling plains extended to the north and north-east, whilst the Cordillera rose like a wall on the western side. This hill is called by the Indians 'God's Hill;' and the tradition, as communicated by Casimiro, relates that from this spot the Great Spirit dispersed the animals which he had made in the caverns. But some of the animals must have remained behind, as, out on the lower slope of the downs, two pumas were chased and killed. An hour's ride

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perse my library, namely, half of the delightful 'Elsie Venner,' which Crimé had picked up on board some ship to serve as wadding for his guns, and sold to me for a little powder. To enable the reader to follow our somewhat devious course and the intricacies of these hills and frequent rivers, the sketch map at page 164 will be found useful; it does not pretend to be exact, but gives a very fair idea of the line of country traversed, and of our migrations between Henno and Teckel.

On the 22rd, Indians having been seen to the north and guanaco hunting proving a failure, Orkeke, to my great delight, proposed a visit to the wild-cattle country. The camp was accordingly struck, and following more or less the valley of the river, which flowed after one turn nearly due east, we shortly came out into an open plain running up between the mountains, at the head of which we encamped by some tall beeches on the banks of the stream. The whole of the latter part of the plain traversed was literally carpeted with strawberry plants all in blossom, the soil being of a dark peaty nature. Young ostriches were now numerous, and every hunt some were captured, and formed a welcome addition to our dinner. The children had several slings to pelt, which they used to let loose and then catch with miniature bolas, generally ending in killing them. Our programme was to leave all the women, tobbo, and other encumbrances in this spot, named 'Weskel,' or Chaykash—a regular station, and which Hinchel's party had occupied a few weeks previously—and proceed ourselves into the interior in search of cattle. The following morning at daylight horses were caught and saddled, and, after receiving the good wishes of the women, who adjured us to bring back plenty of fat beef, we started off just as the sun was rising behind the hills to the eastward. The air was most invigorating, and we trotted along for some distance up a slightly irregular and sandy slope, halting after an hour or two by the side of a deliciously clear brook, flowing east,

2: Mustero T-5 (1869-1870)1871
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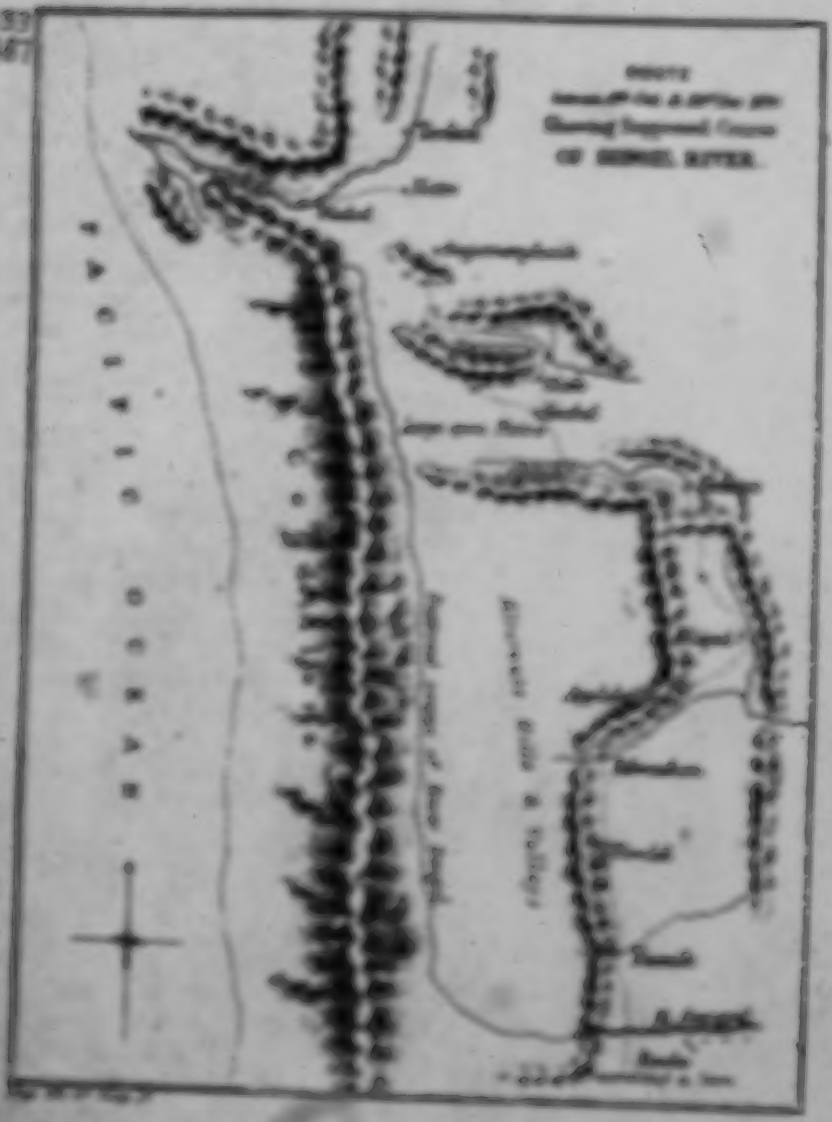

[facing p 164]

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457

End map A

End map B

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487

End map C

133 many havens there, protected by numerous islands and sandbanks. The coast is not as high, but the land is even more barren than that of the [136] other harbors, there being neither water nor grass, although firewood is [312] not altogether lacking, especially inland. The Indians said that the gulf [313] continues toward the west almost up to the mountains, that some springs flow into it there and that it is impossible to cross the mountains to the other side. They added that there is much espinillo brushwood in the [487] region, going from north to south, through which they have cut paths in order to get through, and should they ever deviate from these paths, they become lost. The southern shores of the gulf, they say, are more arid than the northern, but the fauna is the same as in the others. The [422] Indian chiefs who rule this territory are two brothers, called Chaiguas and Enir.

Puerto Deseado is situated at 47° 48' of southern latitude; it is a good harbor but of difficult entry because of the narrowness of its mouth and the violence of the currents which flow in it. The coast is [320] very high and craggy: there is firewood and in the gullies there are some [313] small springs of sweet but slightly brackish water, some 14 in all, which can take care of any need. Game is the same as it was in the other parts: [136] there are innumerable sea lions and seals and an abundance of guanacos. [422] The chief who controls these lands is called Ulquiquenque; he said that the mountain chain is about 20 "sleeps" from the harbor, which must be about 70 leagues, and also that it is impossible to cross over to the other side, that his people have never crossed nor seen other Indians cross the mountains. In this district there is white, black, red and other [135] colored rock, and a little marble in small broken pieces. [86] The [306] earth also is of various colors and the Indians use it to make their paints. [136] There are also many seals and sea lions on the islands in the haven.

The harbor of San Julian is located at 49° 21' of southern latitude and is the best on the coast, although the entrance to it is difficult for an unpracticed person because of the bank at its mouth and two others which are inside. The terrain also is the best on the whole coast, not at all rocky and more fertile, as we found out when we were there the three years which the settlement lasted from 1781 to 1784 [sic]. The closest [312] source of water is about a league from the beach, and is made up of some wells filled by the overflow from a spring which lies about a league and a half away. There is ample firewood in all the dells, all of which [313 also abound in grass and water, the terrain being made up almost en- 137] tirely of such gullies, and of stoneless hills. The mountain chain is 70 leagues away toward the west, and at its base there are three cove-like depressions in each of which there is a lake fed by the snow which melts on the mountain tops. I explored this region at the foot of the mountains

It is improbable that these parts
contain metals, because if there were metal here the Indians would have 135
found it and put it to use; and they would naturally have come upon it
at one time or another as they are never in one place very long, changing
from one site to another in order to subsist on the game which, according
to season, moves inland or comes down to the beaches.

The weapons which they use are the bolas and the lance and also 411
knives and sabers which they acquire from the Pampas Indians of Buenos [418]
Aires or [79] else make themselves from any piece of iron given them 325
and which they regard highly for this reason. They also sometimes find
iron on the beaches, the remains of wrecked ships. It requires a great
deal of effort on their part to make one of these weapons because, even
though they heat the iron by fire, as they have no tools they can only
avail themselves of stones to beat it into shape then they must grind it
by hand and trim it on the rocks and give it a sharp edge and a point.

In their battles they fight on foot, leaving the women in charge 726
of the horses. They put on garments similar to men's shirts, with tight [80]
sleeves, made out of ten or twelve well-worked deer hides which no
knife or saber can penetrate. They put a sort of hat or helmet upon their
heads made of horse or bullock hide, shielded with which they attempt
to slash the enemies' legs and cut through their boots, they being more
vulnerable there. They are very resolute and persevering in battle and
do not abandon the field once upon it until they are either overpowered
or killed. They also use the bolas, and every person who is overcome is
usually killed because they become so zealous and cruel in battle that
they will not give up. This is why this region is not more thickly popu- [184
lated, for the women are very fecund and few diseases bother them. 80]

From Santa Elena to the Rio Negro the Indians say that the land 133
is parched and waterless and only in the rainy season can a few small
lakes be found. When these are dry they are obliged, when they wish 487
to go to the Rio Negro, to travel inland towards the mountains where
there are springs. As they have to travel uphill far to the west to do this
the distance is three times greater when they wish to come down to the
Spanish settlement, compared to the coastal road, if this latter had water.

The tents are pitched by sticking two poles about two or three 342
yards long into the ground, about four and a half feet from each other;
beside each pole and at an equal distance from it, they thrust two shorter
poles into the ground. To the west of these six they place six shorter ones
at an equal distance, and to the west of these at the same distance, six
others a little more than three feet long. Upon these eighteen poles they
place the hide with the hair outward, and secure it to the upper end of all
of the poles. From each pole they hang, on the inside, as it were curtains
of hide which form the necessary divisions. These curtains are tied to the